

The Italian Neurobioethics Study and Research Group: Present and Future of the Neurosciences from a Personalistic Ethical Approach



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Introduction

Neurobioethics is a neologism originally proposed by US neuroscientist and neuroethicist James Giordano in 2005, to emphasize "...The importance of acknowledging the often unique, yet iterative nature of neuroscientific information when considering the specific bioethical issues that arise from the field and its applications¹". Founded in March 2009, the Italy Based International Neurobioethics Multidisciplinary Research and Study Group of the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum (APRA) in Rome, Italy, gathers experts from different disciplines, including Medicine, Biology, Philosophy, Moral Philosophy, Moral Theology, Sociology, Bioethics, Law, Psychology, Media and Communication, etc., whose specificity resides in an Anthropological perspective that attributes value and dignity to every Human Person, regardless of her status or condition.

¹www.neurobioethics.org

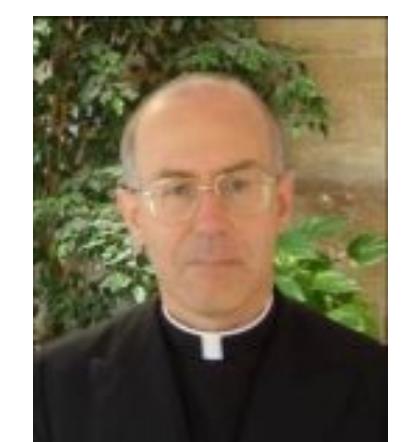
Foundation Day: March 20th, 2009



Adriana Gini, MD, now Co-Chair of the Neurobioethics Group, introduces key Neuroethical issues to professionals and experts from various disciplines gathered at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in Rome, March 20th, 2009.



The Chairs



Prof. Fr. Rafael Pascual, PhD, is Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Director of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights, based in Rome. He is Professor of Philosophy of Law and International Law at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in Rome. He is Full Professor of Philosophy of Science and Nature.



Prof. Alberto García is Doctor in Law and Director of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights, based in Rome. He is Professor of Philosophy of Law and International Law at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in English to the Italian Academic Community in 2009.



Adriana Gini, MD is a Neuroradiologist, Bioethicist, Neuroethicist and Fellow of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights. She has introduced the term *Neurobioetica* (*Neurobioethics* in English) to the Italian Academic Community in 2009. Visiting the labs at Siena Biotech S.p.A., an innovative, clinical-stage drug discovery company focused on the development of new molecules for therapeutic interventions against neurodegenerative diseases. The company's C.E.O is one of the members of our Group.

What is Neurobioethics to us?

Derives a multidisciplinary approach from bioethics and then applies it to fundamental and ethical questions of neuroscience with full respect to the Human Person.

Avails itself of empirical science in a continuous and balanced dialogue with the humanities.

Turns particular attention toward scientific data, derived from the most recent studies on neuro-biological dimensions and toward their inescapable social and legal implications.

Is distinguished from bioethics by a particularly critical and detailed reflection on the nature of the Human Person, its dynamism and its capacity to relate to itself and its meaning ("human flourishing").

Our Mission

- Create a forum of professionals and scholars to adopt an authentically interdisciplinary approach.
- Promote internal dialogue and debate about the prevailing arguments.
- Research and integrate methodology with the contributions of philosophical and anthropological principles.
- Ensure that the unrenounceable centrality of the Human Person be adequately developed in studies, research, publications, etc.
- Disseminate proposals and eventual guidelines privileging a terminology attentive to the intrinsic value and dignity of the Human Person in Neuroscience.
- Create a network for supporting dialogue and exchange, including one on an international level.
- Identify incentives so that cognitive scientists research points of contact between neuroscience and a philosophical and anthropological vision centered on the Human Person.

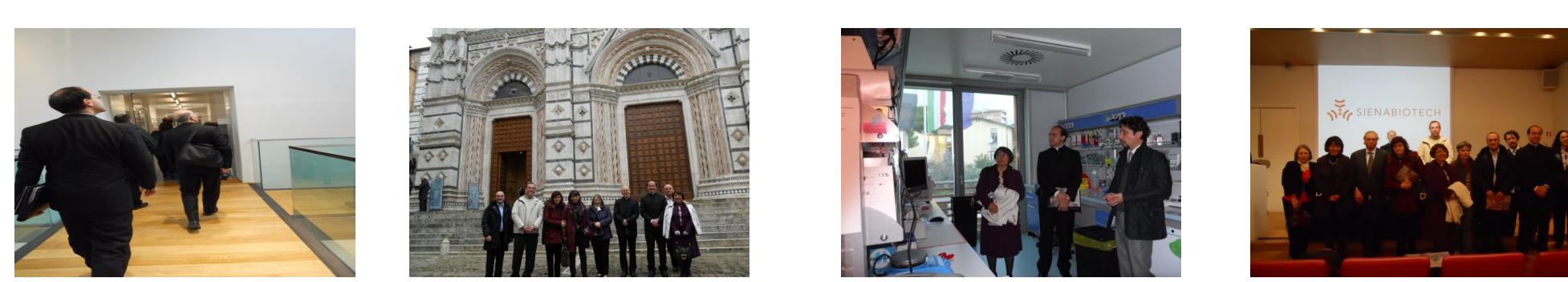
Some photos from our album



Group photos at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in Rome



Meeting in video-conferencing at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in Rome



Visiting the labs at Siena Biotech S.p.A., an innovative, clinical-stage drug discovery company focused on the development of new molecules for therapeutic interventions against neurodegenerative diseases. The company's C.E.O is one of the members of our Group.

Our first Seminar



In our first interdisciplinary seminar, held at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum, on September 18th, 2009, four speakers and members of our Group, presented on:

Studies on Consciousness and the Dignity of Man

Prof. James Giordano in Washington, D.C. and the Veritatis Splendor Institute in Bologna participated in the event through a system of audio-video conferencing.



An Intensive Care Physician, a post-doc Physicist from the Liege Coma Science Group, a Full Professor of Philosophy and Metaphysics and a Catholic Journalist, tackled the main topic from different but convergent perspectives.

Conclusion: Every Human Person has equal dignity regardless of her status or clinical condition.



The Institutions



The Neurobioethics Group is part of the Science and Faith Institute and the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics and Human Rights of the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in Rome



Prof. James Giordano, Director of the Center for Neurotechnology Studies at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, Arlington, Virginia, and Research Associate of the Wellcome Centre for Neuroethics at the University of Oxford, UK is our distinguished member and has collaborated with our activities through frequent videoconferencing.

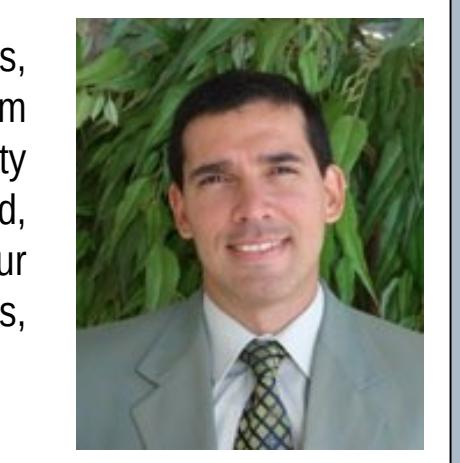
Two members of our group participated in the Visiting Scholar program with James Giordano, in 2009 and 2010.



The Coe Science Group in Liege Belgium is hosting a four month research project by one of our members. Michele Farisco, PhD in Philosophy is in the center, between Steven Laureys, MD (left) and Andrea Soddu, PhD (also our member). Justin Rossi, A.B. is a full-time research assistant and works on cyber security policy at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies. Justin collaborates with Prof. James Giordano. He has helped us with the translation of numerous documents.



The Neuroscientific Pledge by Prof. Curtis Bell on the misuse of neuroscientific discoveries in aggressive wars and tortures has been debated in a group meeting. An article and an interview to the US Neuroscientist were recently published on an Italian Bioethics Magazine.



Our XVII group meeting



During our XVII group meeting at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum, March 14th, Prof. Michael Spezio, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Department of Psychology, Scripps College, Claremont and Visiting Associate Scientist, Psychology and Neuroscience Division, of Humanities & Social Sciences, Caltech, Pasadena, CA, spoke on: **The HABITVS project: Human Archetypes Biology, Intersubjectivity, and Trascendence**.



Our Logo

For our logo, we have chosen a tree in a light blue background, whose crown is made up of human beings and resembles an encephalon. A man and a woman, in contrasting colors, stand out.



Prof. James Giordano's comment was: *A tree of wisdom populated with branches of embodied selves that are unique, interacting, and arising from a common 'branch of life'...very cool!*

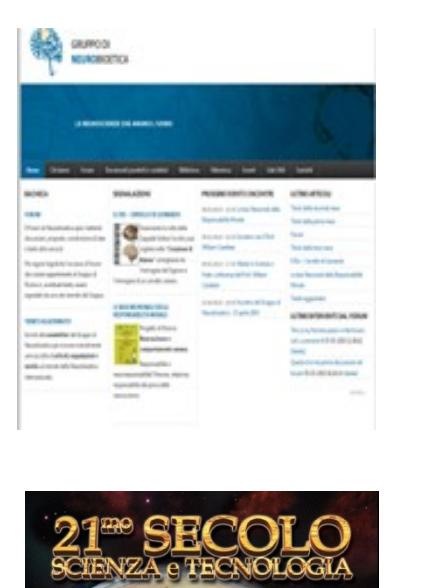
Education, Media, Work in Progress



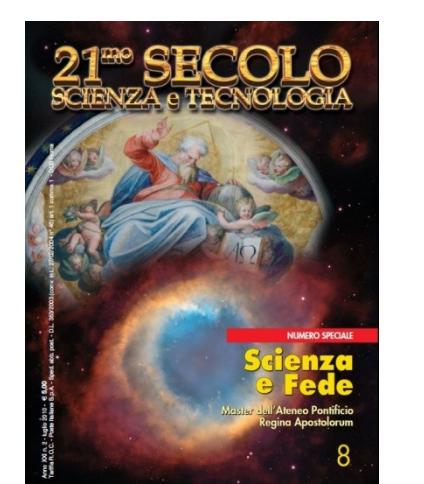
"Introduction to Neurobioethics" is one of the courses offered by the Science and Faith Diploma Program, directed by the Science and Faith Institute, Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum, Rome, since October, 2010.

Our web site, *Neurobioetica*, was launched on October 14th, 2010.

A monographic Issue of "21mo Secolo" on *Neurobioethics* will be published December 2011.



The Topic of the 2012 Update Bioethics Summer course of the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum will be *Neurobioethics*.



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